



Escaping the Water in Frankstown, PA

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Blair County, Pennsylvania

Frankstown, PA - Some Linds Crossing residents refer to the Little Juniata River that flows by their houses as "The Gentle Giant." On a normal day, the stream is gentle, shallow and slow moving, though hardly a giant. Given a hard rain upstream, however, it quickly becomes gigantic and not at all gentle. Linds Crossing was developed in 1911 as a "Summer Home Farm" in rural Blair County, a modest recreation area of weekend and summer cottages, small frame houses huddled densely along the Little Juniata.



Over the years, the neighborhood in Frankstown Township, near Hollidaysburg, evolved. Today, most residents live there full time. Homeowners praise its beauty, the peace and quiet, the absence of urban stress. Many have lived there for decades, and most seem to wish to stay. Yet, they pay a price for the advantages they extol. The same quiet river that provides boating and fishing, refreshing summer swims and cool breezes, can change dramatically with little warning. The Little Juniata floods often. Small, localized bouts of high water also are commonplace.

The price was becoming too high. Jean Jordan had lived in her house more than 20 years and declared, "I love it around here...I've got fish in the river I feed... and geese." Further, she was afraid to move "because I don't like to be in debt." The flooding risk would have made her house difficult to sell. She was certain she could not get enough for it to buy anything similar in a safer spot. Yet, she was experiencing "flooding about three times a year, and it was becoming "too hard to clean up after the floods."

Under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), Jordan could stay in her home but not run the risk of continual flooding. Raising Jordan's house on a new concrete-block foundation put it above flood level, but left it in its surroundings. She declared herself delighted. "I'm so glad it's up in the air, I don't know how to act."

Dave and Wendy Reighard took a different approach under the HMGP umbrella. They decided to sell their house and move a short distance away. As much as they liked their old location, the "peace of mind" they enjoy in their new home is "priceless."

The driving force behind the Linds Crossing Project was Richard Furmanchik, executive director, and Beverly Pounds, deputy executive director, of the County of Blair Redevelopment and Housing Authority. They shepherded the project from beginning to end. In the process, they won the gratitude and respect of a good many residents.

Wendy Reighard agreed the "program was a success...The number one goal was to get people out of harm's way, and it definitely did that." She praised the attention Furmanchik and Pounds paid to the concerns of the Linds Crossing population. "They listened to people," she said. "I'm very pleased with the way the people in this office treated us." The fourth time the Reighards were flooded was in 1997, they were negotiating with a realtor for their new house. "We had moved everything downstairs in preparation for the move," David Reighard recalled. "The water came through and trashed (the house) two weeks before we were ready to move."

This was the flood that trapped the Reighards in their house. Marooned on the upper-level deck, they watched furniture ripped by the water from their neighbors' houses and swept away. They could feel the deck swaying under them, as a helicopter circled overhead. High winds made an air rescue unsafe, however, and they spent a long night in the house. Among the possession they lost in this deluge were all their photographs of their children and their comprehensive log of previous flood damage.

All told, 38 Linds Crossing residents moved above flood levels, and 37 moved out of the area entirely through the HMGP project.

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region III**

State: **Pennsylvania**

County: **Blair County**

City/Community: **Hollidaysburg**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public/Private Partnership**

Hazard Type: **Flooding**

Activity/Project Type: **Acquisition/Buyouts; Elevation, Structural**

Activity/Project Start Date: **01/1950**

Activity/Project End Date: **01/1997**

Funding Source: **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)**

Funding Recipient: **Local Government**

Funding Recipient Name: **County of Blair Redevelopment and Housing Authority**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **Amount Not Available**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **Unknown**

Value Tested By Disaster? **Unknown**

Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.fema.gov/about/contact/regioniii.shtm>

Reference URL 2: <http://www.dep.state.pa.us/dep/emergency/response/default.htm>

Main Points

- The same quiet river that provides boating and fishing, refreshing summer swims and cool breezes, can change dramatically with little warning. The Little Juniata floods often. Small, localized bouts of high water also are commonplace.
- County of Blair Redevelopment and Housing Authority officials worked with the residents with details of HMGP.
- All told, 38 Linds Crossing residents moved above flood levels, and 37 moved out of the area entirely through the HMGP project.



Jean Jordan looks at her home's new foundation with a FEMA representative.